

Rev. Dr. Mountain 12.

A SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

First Provincial Synod of Canada,

ON

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER, 1861,

IN

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL,

MONTREAL.

BY GEO. J. MOUNTAIN, D.D., D.C.L.,

LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

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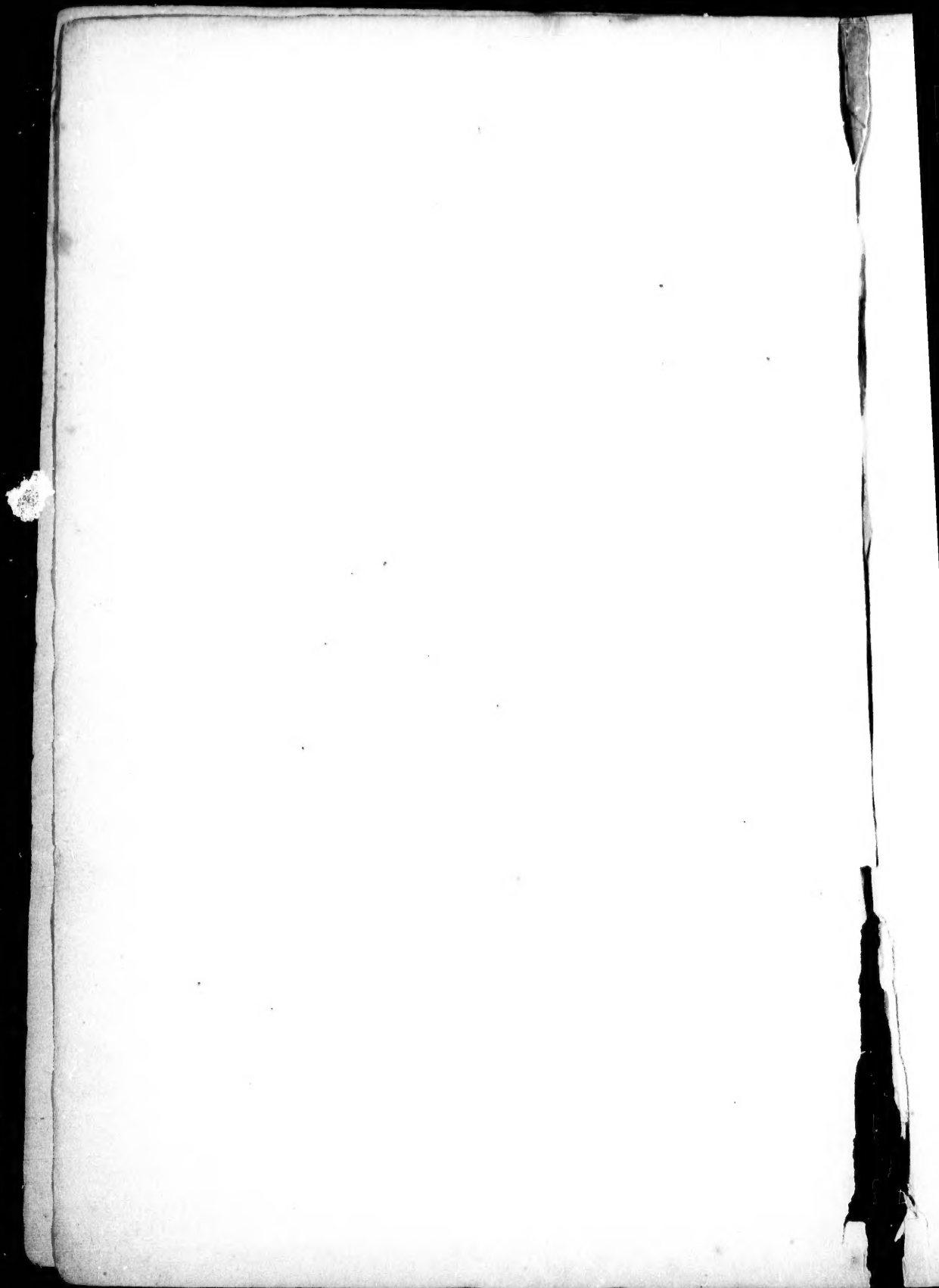
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SERMON.

Isaiah xxxiii, 20.—Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

It is not in any presumptuous or exaggerated view of our pretensions, that I mean to apply this text to the case of the Church of England or any of those other portions of the Church Catholic, with which as having strictly preserved, in conjunction with the faith once delivered to the saints, the ancient line and constitution of the Gospel ministry, she is essentially one. In the Church, no less than in the case of the individual Christian, there is nothing more to be repudiated than an arrogant self-attribution of superiority and, in a boastful proclamation of exclusive privilege, we exhibit only the symptom of a dangerously diseased condition—the prelude, perhaps, of an irrecoverable fall. Trust ye not in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these—but thoroughly amend your ways and your doings. We know well that, in the earliest times of Christianity, there were Churches apostolically founded which were warned, in the persons of their respective angels or governing officers, of their liability to have the candlestick removed out of its place. And we know how the warning was made good. There may, indeed, be remarkable instances in which the doom which God has decreed, may, in the gradual execution of his vast purposes on behalf of his people, hang on

even for successive ages, before it bursts. The boast may be heard, in loud and lofty tones, replete as it is with conspicuous fallacy, that "amplitude, duration, and worldly prosperity,"* are among the infallible notes of the true Church. But what do we see portrayed in those marked delineations of prophecy, where the vivid touches from the hand of Isaiah are found renewed, after the intervention of centuries, by that of St. John,—the correspondence being too close to admit of the supposition that there is not an object *involved*, which in both instances is the same, and the full and ultimate application of these predictions, remaining yet to be developed in the event? We see a mysterious power as the subject of those delineations, which, with a mouth that speaketh great things,† and in all the inflated pride of a false but insolent feeling of security, declares for itself,—I am, and none else beside me: I shall not sit as a widow neither shall I know the loss of children. I shall be a lady forever: I sit a queen. And what is the issue to which the sketches of the prophetic pencil direct our eyes? What but the crash of an overwhelming ruin, the terrific spectacle of a sudden and irretrievable destruction?

I have been prompted to set these particular reflections in the forefront of my subject, in order to protect the whole array of what is to follow, against the imputation of any foolishly elated and self-satisfied spirit, any rash assumption of immoveable pre-eminence, or any inordinate and too ambitious expectations, in the contemplation either of our privileges, or of our achievements. CHRIST, CHRIST is He whom we have to magnify: ourselves we have only to abase; and truly we have for self abasement, cause enough: cause enough upon different grounds; and *that* without adverting to the leprosy which has broken out among some leaders in Israel, and the plague-spot of which may exist in unsuspected quarters. Privileges,—great, signal and special privileges we do enjoy; and prospects have been opened before us, in the mercy of God, and objects effected too, which warrant the persuasion that He designs to use the Church of England as one grand instrument for the advance and extension of His kingdom over the face of the earth. Be not high minded, but fear. It is in a spirit of trembling hope, and of

* Bossuet: quoted from memory, and at second hand.

† Dan. vii., 8.

chastened thankfulness,—as well as in the deepest sense of our far-extended responsibilities,—in the direct recognition of the favours which we have received and the auguries which we are enabled to frame, as serving to impart to us a stimulus, for unrelaxing watchfulness and zeal,—it is only *thus* that we must venture to appropriate the magnificent encouragements of our text, Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

And, thus regarding, thus qualifying it, we may venture to make the appropriation. We may make it with all comfort and joy. We may make it in a modest indulgence of the happiest and most exalted anticipations. We may apply the description not only to the awakening by the hand of God of a new spirit within the Church at home with reference to all the work there immediately in her hands, but to the extension, the really wonderful extension of her work abroad—and that in her full and legitimate organization, of which it is shame to think that it was so long denied. At the time when he who now addresses you first came into the world, there was but one Bishop of the Church of England, in the entire extent of our Colonial dependencies throughout the Empire and that one Bishop was the first: before him there was not one solitary example to be found. We now number (assuming some latitude of accommodation in the use of the word *Colonial*;) upwards of forty Colonial Bishops: in Canada alone, with an approaching happy accession, we have five; and six within a range of country which at one time was traversed by the Episcopal ministrations of one among us.* In that vast portion of foreign America which, while it belonged to us, we left totally unprovided in this behalf,—the office being something experimentally unknown to our own people within those limits, the number also exceeds forty. I will not enlarge, however, upon what cannot be otherwise than a familiar subject of our thoughts as well as of our thankful prognostications, and will barely glance at the onward march of the Church and her institutions, still *pari passu* with the advance of the Episcopate, or at the marvellous fruits which have been gathered in, and the Apostolic labours which have been called forth by the peculiar nature of the charge committed to our

* The author of the sermon.

bishops and clergy, in certain regions of the earth: Regions where the transforming grace of the Gospel has operated the same change upon a people more sunk and debased, as was witnessed where the name of Christian was first assumed by the disciples, and where, we are told of Barnabas, that when he had seen the Grace of God he was glad. I forbear also from expatiating upon such happily increased facilities for the work of the Church, and for the share assigned to her in the evangelization of the world, as are found *first* in the partial loosening of the rein by which Convocation was so long and so rigorously held fast, and *secondly*, in the removal of all impediments to our sending missionary bishops into heathen lands beyond our own dominions. The Church must indeed be considered as in a hampered and crippled condition, if it be interdicted to her so to lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, that she can freely break forth on the right hand and on the left,* carrying her Ministry in its fulness, into any of the outlying high-ways and hedges of human society: Commissioned as she is by the voice of her Lord and Master to announce wherever the sun illumines the habitable portions of the globe†, that all things are ready, and to bring in guests to his table from among the outcasts of the world. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Yes—blessed Lord—that is the lofty commission, and that the sustaining promise, which we have received from Thee; and we will not have any rest in our spirits till we, till we of the Church of England, have done our part, trusting to thyself to give the increase, in contributing to bring on the glorious consummation—how short, as yet, of its accomplishment!—when thou shalt take to thyself all "the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession," till "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea."

Within the British dominions in North America, and, to a certain extent, within our own Province of Canada, we know that the Church has done labour, and has labour to do, for a race reclaimed, or remaining to be reclaimed from the darkness of heathenism and the wildness

*Is. liv. 2, 3.

†—O quâ Sol habitabiles
Illustrat oras.—Hor.

of savage life. But labour where we will, and in whatever advanced condition of civilized society, never, never will it cease to form part of our task that we should turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And when we felicitate ourselves upon the enlargement of the Church at home from fetters long fastened upon her without relaxation, as well as upon the greater liberty and more open privilege which have been conceded to us in this behalf, in the colonies, we shall none of us I trust, forget, whether of the Clergy or the Laity who take part in our Synods, that the *ultimate* objects of all ecclesiastical deliberations and proceedings are the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men. It has not, perhaps, been always exactly in such a tone and spirit as this that we have engaged in the exercise of our Synodical powers. A sort of secular character, a character partaking of a political aspect has been shed, here and there, over the movement. And correspondingly with this there may be a danger, (I speak here more particularly with reference to us who are of the clergy,) of some prejudice done to our constancy in a state of spiritual preparation within the man and our active devotedness abroad, to the good of souls, by means of an insensible absorption of the mind in familiarizing itself with the forms and the machinery of business, providing for the readier transaction of affairs, cultivating the habit of skilful debate and planning improvements to be effected by ecclesiastical legislation—things which are all good, desirable and useful in themselves, but which we must take care to make subsidiary only and subordinate to those grand objects which are in view, where the council assembled is a council which has in hand the affairs of the Kingdom of God—the Kingdom which is not of this world. The author of the History of Cardinal Mazarin, referring to some remarks passed at the time, upon the comparative qualifications of certain French ecclesiastics as fitting subjects for advancement in the Church, takes occasion to point out, with seeming approbation, that the Popes are well known to be chosen, not for being more eminent in piety and zeal, but for being more able politicians—more conversant with public business, and more practised in the administration of affairs of state; and that for one who is excluded from the Sovereign Pontificate because he labors under suspicion of irregularity in his moral principles and conduct, there are ten and more who are rejected on account of their want of acquaintance with matters of Government. Such a principle, we trust,

will never be seen to pervade our own body, never be known to actuate our proceedings. Habits of method, clearness in the arrangement and distribution and readiness in the transaction of public business, fertility in resource, patience of attention and penetration in dealing with plausible appearances—all these, as already intimated, are qualities of most undeniable value in dealing with such matters as are entrusted to the management of Synods: And if they are kept pure from any tendencies which may cause the salt to lose its savour,—far from seeking to depreciate or to repress them, we ought to recognize the help and benefit which they bring us and thankfully to avail ourselves of the facility which they afford for expediting and successfully conducting our affairs. It is well for us in our collective capacity to remember the familiar charge of our Master—"Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

And here I would observe farther, with reference to a point not wholly without affinity to the remarks just made, that, as I do venture to think, there is a great mistake committed by some eminently pious and zealous men who engage in the sacred work of extending the Gospel over the world,—a great mistake when they seem to confine their object simply and exclusively to the change to be operated upon individual souls, and to repudiate all idea of enlarging the kingdom of Christ in any other sense than as this effect is conceived to be produced—to measure, in short, the whole work, in all its parts, by this standard alone. For, granting most freely that we can never be too much in earnest, in deprecating a mere formal adoption of Christianity, a name in religion without the reality of love, a mere carcase without life, it must be conceded, I think, on the other hand, that with respect to the evidences of grace in individual subjects, we are apt sometimes to pronounce upon them, from tests which very insufficiently ascertain the case:—Men may be wrought upon, on the one side,—in fact it is a very common occurrence,—so as to exhibit what are accepted as decisive marks of conversion which may one day prove to have been fallacious; and the power of Religion may have sunk deeper into the hearts of others of a retiring character and a reserved temperament, than we are ready to imagine or allow. The great day alone will bring all to light. I believe that, in this very point of view, as well as in others, the saying of the Saviour

will be signally verified, that many who are first shall be last, and the last first. It is a dangerous forgetfulness to lose sight of the maxim that we are to judge nothing before the time. But this is not all. For supposing, *argumenti gratia*, such a case as that the ministry of the Church, from whatever cause, should be found, here or there, unsuccessful in the great work of turning sinners, whether Jew, Turk, Pagan, or nominally Christian, from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God,—are we to conclude from thence that nothing is done when a foundation is laid, among any body of people, for a Scriptural and Apostolic system of Religion,—when the channels are opened, the machinery prepared, the provisions established for introducing and perpetuating a Church, which, in the lowest estimate of her performance, will distribute the word and dispense the sacraments of Christ, with the sanctification of the seventh day; and by her very worship, by her ordinances, by the cycle of her observances, will familiarize her people with the great and saving truths of the gospel, of which these observances may, in their digested series, be well said to exhibit an epitome? If we can imagine such a case as that all this can be done without any present return of fruit, or immediately satisfactory result in the spiritual condition of the worshippers,—upon which we ought never too hastily or without sure warrant to render our verdict—yet is nothing done when all is at least in fair train for carrying on the grand purposes of the Christian Ministry, and the instruments are ready by which Christ may, in God's good time, if it really has not been already done, be brought effectually home to the hearts of men?

Among these instruments, we indulge the hope and trust that our Synods now extensively introduced into the Colonial dependencies of the Empire, will in the active exercise of their functions, sustain an important and beneficial part. Surveying all the provision and all the apparatus of the Church for executing the commission confided to her hands, we may contemplate, side by side with the delineations of our text, those glowing words of the Psalmist, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her, and tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks, set up (or consider) her palaces, that ye may tell them that come after"* and we may adapt, in the way of application to our Synods, the words

* Psalm xlviii. 11, 12, Prayer Book translation.

of another animated Psalm, where the distinguished privileges of Zion are portrayed, that *there*, as one of those special privileges, is *the seat of judgment*.^{*} We may look far back to the ancient Church of God in the wilderness, and we see there Moses *sitting to judge* the people—guiding their movements, regulating their proceedings, resolving their difficulties, reconciling their differences, governing and administering their affairs at large. Yet though he acted under a direct commission from on high, enjoying “celestial colloquy sublime,”[†] and was invested conspicuously by the hand of God with wonderful working powers, we observe that he availed himself at once of the suggestion offered by his father-in-law for his relief. Jethro had just witnessed the oppressive weight of his labours, as well as the inconvenience suffered by the people from his having to deal single-handed with them all; and recommended that, reserving for his own jurisdiction the disposal of the higher and harder causes, he would provide himself, out of all the people, with help. And the requisite qualifications of these proposed assistants are specified. They were to be able men, such as fear God; men of truth, hating covetousness. Moses loved his people: he prayed, upon one occasion, in a strain similar to the sentiment expressed many centuries afterwards, on behalf of the same people, by St. Paul, rather to be himself blotted out of the book of life, than that the threatened doom should come upon them. And we see in another instance, how far he was superior to any mere personal jealousy of power, such as would grudge to see others made participants of privileges vouchsafed to himself: “Enviest thou for my sake? Would God all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!”[§]

These words, we remember, were uttered upon the occasion of assembling by Divine command, the seventy elders,—the same body, in the judgment of some divines, which had already been created, as just noticed, upon the recommendation of his father-in-law. And the origin is there supposed to be found of the Sanhedrim, or great council of

^{*} Psalm cxxii. 5.

[†] Ex. xviii. 13.

[‡] Paradise lost.

[§] Numbers xi. 20.

seventy, which subsisted so long as the nation had a home. The government and legislation of the State and the government and legislation of the Church having been, under the system given to the Israelites, so intertwined and incorporated together as to constitute in a manner, one and the same thing,—this Sanhedrim may be considered as having been alike an ecclesiastical Synod and a feature in the political organization of the country.

The first Council of the Christian Church of which we have record is that held at Jerusalem upon the question which had been agitated with much heat, of imposing upon the gentile converts, the obligation to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. The deputation from Antioch were to address themselves to the *Apostles and elders* (or Presbyters), and the *Apostles and elders* came together, accordingly, to consider of this matter. But we see that the multitude of believers were present, and that after the address of James, who appears to have presided, a voice was given, in the decision upon the course to be adopted, to the Church at large. It pleased the Apostles and elders, *with the whole Church*, to send chosen men to Antioch with written instructions for the believers there, upon the subject in dispute. The authors of these instructions announce themselves, in the form of greeting by which the missive is headed, as the Apostles, elders and brethren; and they proceed to say, it seemed good unto us, i. e. to us the Apostles, elders and brethren just mentioned,—being assembled *with one accord*, to send chosen men.* It does appear, therefore, that, while a distinctive place and character is preserved, in terms sufficiently marked, to the *Apostles and Elders*, the body of believers, under the names of *the whole Church* and *the brethren*, were associated in the transaction. To a similar effect is the testimony afforded in a passage from the writings of St. Paul. St. Paul certainly never leads us to lose sight of the estimation and reverent consideration of the Christian Ministry. Yet we find that Apostle, where he refers to a judicial proceeding in the exercise of discipline within the infant Church at Corinth, declaring the sufficiency of a punishment which he describes as having been *inflicted of many*.

Some standing co-operation, therefore, of the laity in the conduct of matters ecclesiastical, appears to have been established, both under the

* Acts xv. 3, 6, 22, 23, 25.

law and in Apostolic days under the Gospel, as a sort of constitutional feature of the Church.

I forbear from occupying your time (the saving of time being, upon the present occasion, an object of some consequence) by an investigation of precedents discoverable in the ages near to Apostolic days and shall content myself with a simple reference to what the learned Judge Hoffman of New York, whose work has, more or less, been made familiar among us by our being called to the duties of Synodical action, has collected in the way of authority upon this subject, in particular as relating to the Church in the British Isles.

Upon the whole, then, we have been doing nothing new, nothing rashly experimental, nothing unsustained by ancient nor yet—for look at the progress and successful working of the Church in the neighboring republic—by modern principles and practice, in enlisting the help of our lay-brethren and inviting their active interest in the management of our Church affairs. These affairs are their own affairs; for it is they who, with us, constitute the Church—and why should they not have a voice in the deliberations and the administrative functions of that Church? They will not, on their part, seek to usurp more than their place. The more familiar they are made, by their practical share in it, with the system of the Church, the more intelligent and the more lively will be their appreciation of it; the better they will understand the necessity of preserving an inviolable regularity and a well-balanced subordination in her associated proceedings. As we, on our side, are taught that we are not to lord it over the heritage nor to affect dominion over their faith, as we are ready, while we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus our Lord, to be their servants for Jesus' sake,—so they on theirs, will not fail to remember that their teachers are set over them in the Lord and that they are charged, with reference to the pastoral office of the Clergy and the maintenance of conformity to the regulations of the Church, to obey them that have the rule over them and submit themselves to those who watch for their souls as they that must give account. Never ought these principles to be lost sight of, from any desire of popularity for its own sake, or in accommodation to any prevalent notions of the day; for there will always be some reigning and favorite error, and it will always be part of the duty of the Church of God to testify

against it. What we have to do in our Synodical proceedings is to carry on, Ministers and people hand in hand, the system delivered down to us in the Episcopal Church of England; and while we forbear from pronouncing upon the case of bodies differently constituted, or decrying their efficiency and zeal, none of us, whatever position he may occupy, ought, from any false personal delicacy, to suffer without seeking to prevent it, the distinctive principle of our own system to be either assailed or undermined—the principle, linked inseparably as a safeguard with the preservation of order, unity, stability and soundness in the Church, that the supreme government of the Church and the channel for the conveyance of Ministerial power is found in the order of Bishops. Men among ourselves, and good men, too, may be found seeking to discredit this principle, and teach others to sneer at it as an exploded notion; but does any man seriously and deliberately believe that the Ministry of the Church of England or any of her offshoots, will ever, while the world lasts, be constituted and carried on upon any other principle than that which compelled the Episcopalians of America, at the close of the revolutionary war, to procure consecration in England for the men who were to hold and pass on the Episcopal office, and through that office, to have the title transmitted for the other two orders of the Ministry? Would not the very men who cry down these principles, or who shrink from asserting them, be rather backward, if it came to the point, to accept a Ministry which should be fabricated, *de novo*, at the will of this or that self-constituted authority, in order to provide for the demands of the Church? No—look, in this very point of view, as well as in others, upon Zion, the city of our solemnities:—She is a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

Never, I trust, will the peculiar Anglican stamp, the genuine Anglican character and spirit, (with whatever necessity for some partial adaptation to local circumstances) be obliterated from our Colonial institutions. They are dear and most justly dear to our hearts; and fervently may we hope, and fully may we trust, that the establishment of a Metropolitan Jurisdiction, in compliance with our own petitions, and in conformity with the Anglican system at home and abroad, will

tend to confirm and to perpetuate our close identity with the honored institutions which have been passed to us from our fathers. But while we are charged in our Synodical capacity with the duty of carrying out the system of the Church of England in its integrity, we must remember that there may be such things as discipline to be improved, defections in practice and usage to be corrected—neglects to be repaired—and the full original intention of ecclesiastical provisions and appointments to be recovered.

And here I might enlarge upon a variety of points of this nature—but we should open a wide field upon which it is impossible now to enter—for these observations must be drawn to their close. I will barely *enumerate*, therefore, some two or three examples in point, which ought, in my apprehension, to be kept in view, as subjects for correction gradually to be effected as the time shall serve:—Such as the revival, in its proper efficiency, of the office of Deacons and the employment perhaps of school-master Deacons to continue in that grade; but never the admission to holy Orders of men engaged in trades or callings purely secular: Or the restoration of rule and discipline in the admission of new or unknown comers to the holy communion, and of parties who present themselves to fill the office of sponsors, with reference to which last I presume that we are to have the advantage here of the action taken in Convocation at home to adapt the 29th Canon to the altered circumstances of the Church:—And I think that we ought to take some steps to turn better to our own spiritual improvement and the effective condition of the Church, certain particular observances provided for that end, such as the set seasons for special objects, and among others the neglected Ember days which suggest everywhere the prayers of the faithful at the times of ordination, that we may be furnished with godly and able ministers of Christ. I will say nothing—for I must stop—respecting the recommendation of a closer attention wherever it is fairly practicable (and to such extent I may be pardoned, perhaps, for stating that I have long ago enforced that attention within my own Diocese,) to the law laid down for us by the Church that we should, for the more reverence of feeling and edifying solemnity of effect, celebrate the sacrament of baptism and the ordinance of marriage within consecrated walls.

And now in the review of this whole subject and of all its details, how can I more appropriately close than in words better than the words of man—words taken from a familiar Psalm of which I have already had occasion to cite another part, and remarkably in harmony with those of our text,—“O pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls and plenteousness within thy palaces (plenteousness of grace and blessing within every sanctuary and every home of the Church.) For my brethren and companions' sake I will wish thee prosperity. Yea, because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek to do thee good.” To which let us all add as the determined expression of our own inextinguishable attachments, the sacred pledge proclaimed aloud by priests, and people, when the temple worship, after the captivity, was restored under Nehemiah,—
“AND WE WILL NOT FORSAKE THE HOUSE OF OUR GOD.” AMEN AND AMEN!